



General Government A Subcommittee  
Appropriations Committee, Connecticut General Assembly  
Legislative Office Building, Room 2700  
Hartford, CT 06106  
Submitted by: Helen Humphreys, Communications Coordinator

**Testimony IN SUPPORT of**

Senate Bill SB 471 - An Act Concerning the State Budget for the Biennium Ending June 30, 2025, and Making Appropriations Thereafter - if AMENDED with the following additions for the  
**Connecticut Voting Rights Act &  
Early Voting**

February 16th, 2023

Senator Anwar, Representative Ryan, Ranking Members Berthel and Chaleski, and members of the General Government A Subcommittee of the Appropriations Committee:

My name is Helen Humphreys and I am the Communications Coordinator for **Connecticut Citizen Action Group**. CCAG, and its thousands of members, recently celebrated 51 years of engaging people in Connecticut in altering the relations to power. We are a member of the CT Safe Vote coalition and Unrig Bridgeport Coalition, and work with a number of grassroots organizations and activists to bring Connecticut's restrictive voting laws into the 21st century.

CCAG would like to show their strong **support of Senate Bill SB 471 - An Act Concerning the State Budget for the Biennium Ending June 30, 2025, and Making Appropriations Thereafter - if amended with the following additions:** that \$1.95 million be appropriated for the Connecticut Voting Rights Act and that the legislature fully fund an accessible, equitable, and expansive plan for in-person early voting.

Connecticut has the opportunity to be a national leader in protecting the right to vote for Black residents and communities of color. Legislators must seize this opportunity to make our elections functional and inclusive for all our state's citizens. They must do so by allocating the appropriate funds to make sure the Connecticut Voting Rights Act and Early Voting implementation is done so in an equitable and sufficient manner.

**In regards to the Connecticut Voting Rights Act:**

The Voting Rights Act of 1965 has been drastically weakened by the Courts and Congress has failed voters with their inability to act. Therefore we must look to state officials to lead by example to protect our right to vote.

Connecticut has made progress toward establishing a better reputation on voting rights and racial justice. But the job is far from finished. There are still serious problems with the way



Connecticut's voting system works—and persistent barriers to equal participation by Black, Latino, Asian, and Native American voters. .

It's still too easy for those who engage in outright voter intimidation to get away with it. All too often, these problems go unaddressed because they're happening at the local level, where the oversight and tools needed to ensure fairness are lacking or don't exist.

Named after one of the greatest civil rights heroes in U.S. history, the John R. Lewis Voting Rights Act of Connecticut will establish Connecticut as a new nationwide leader in the movement to revitalize American democracy.

### **In regards to the implementation of Early Voting:**

Last fall, CCAG and a majority of Connecticut voters gave you a powerful direction: expand access to the vote by implementing early voting. This was the most popular item on the ballot — 60 percent of voters, an emphatic majority — agreed that just one day to cast a ballot is not enough.

Yet, more than a month into the legislative session, serious discussion of early voting has been insufficient. We are disappointed the governor didn't designate a single dollar to early voting implementation in his budget proposal. It would be a mistake not to prioritize early voting this session.

It's now your turn, elected leaders, to make early voting accessible, make it fair, and make it count.

- **Accessible early voting** means polls are open in the mornings, evenings, and on multiple weekends so that senior, working, and disabled voters can cast their ballots.
- **Fair early voting** means adequate funding to pay election officials, educate voters, and run operations securely in every municipality. It also means ensuring a baseline of voting sites based on town size. Currently, underfunded districts, which are predominantly Black and Brown, have lower voter participation due to the inequitable effects of systemic racism.
- **Making it count** means that early voting must be implemented in 2023 so that hard-working election officials can implement it this November, before the highly-anticipated national election of 2024.

We must protect the right to vote through state law. Funding the Connecticut Voting Rights Act and an accessible, equitable, and expansive early voting plan will enfranchise Black voters and communities of color. In order to create a truly inclusive, multiracial democracy in this state, we need real, structural change – and these laws will help us achieve our collective goal.

**Thank you** - *Helen Humphreys, Connecticut Citizen Action Group*